5th INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SOCIETAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
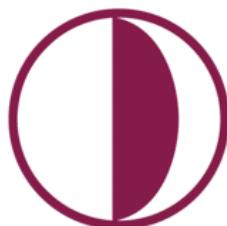
Center of Excellence Societal Research and Development Centre, Near East University

19-20 November 2025

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REPORT

19 November 2025

On November 19, the symposium began with invited speakers Prof. Dr. Murat Özgören (Center of Excellence, Near East University) and Prof. Dr. Anna CohenMiller (Nordic University).

Social Innovation as a Pathway to Inclusive and Sustainable Transformation

This presentation highlighted the increasing value of social innovation as a practical model for addressing societal challenges in health, education, sustainability, and economic development. Social innovation promotes collaborative and sustainable solutions that prioritize public benefit over commercial gain, enabling communities to improve quality of life through interdisciplinary partnerships among universities, NGOs, public institutions, industry, and local stakeholders. Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) can play an essential role by supporting research, fundraising, mentorship, and commercialization processes that help transform academic knowledge into real community outcomes.

The presentation emphasized that social innovation could especially support disability inclusion through accessible technologies, community services, and inclusive design. It also underlined the importance of strengthening the role of women in leadership, entrepreneurship, and social development initiatives. Moreover, social innovation must expand opportunities for disadvantaged groups by improving access to wide range of services including learning, healthcare, and employment. Together, these efforts ensure that innovative solutions are socially embedded, equitable, and capable of generating lasting societal transformation. The key element lies in the effective collaboration of NGOs in articulating societal needs, academia in developing strategic thinking and knowledge frameworks, and public institutions in ensuring implementation and a sustained pathway forward.

Prof. Dr. Murat Özgören NERITA, Center of Excellence Near East University

Workshop on Service Quality in Civil Society Organizations

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Adile Öniz Özgören

On the same day, the program continued with the Workshop on Service Quality, moderated by Prof. Dr. Adile Öniz Özgören. The quality of services aimed at benefiting society was examined with the participation of associations such as the Business People Association, Education Managers Association, Cancer Patients Aid Association, etc. During the sessions organized throughout the workshop, the sustainability, accessibility, and effectiveness of the services expressed by both the public and civil society organizations were examined and discussed with various examples. Participants contributing to the symposium understood, through discussions and activities, that service quality is not limited to technical competence but also encompasses issues such as ethical values, communication, inclusiveness, and stakeholder participation. In addition, emphasis was placed on the need to set quality standards targets when providing services to disadvantaged groups and to evaluate these standards regularly and effectively. Furthermore, participants from different sectors and with various responsibilities had the opportunity to interactively discuss effective implementation examples by sharing examples from their own institutions and personal experiences and expertise. Supporting inter-institutional collaboration and enabling various institutions to design joint projects together has been instrumental in guiding these initiatives. Furthermore, the immediate feedback provided by the speakers at the symposium to participants' questions and the inclusion of participants in the decision-making process have been important factors in enhancing the quality of the project. In the later stages of the project, the concept of "digitalization," which has become very popular today, and its importance in the context of service quality were emphasized. It was also noted that the effective, accurate, and conscious use of technological tools not only speeds up service delivery but also supports the more effective use of resources. However, it was emphasized that digitalization has disadvantages as well as advantages, and this symposium also highlighted that digital inequalities can create serious problems. Thanks to all this, it is recommended that inter-institutional cooperation be supported and strengthened in order to raise the quality of services provided for the benefit of society, that common quality standards be agreed upon and that these standards be monitored and followed up regularly and correctly, in short, that they be subjected to a successful evaluation system. Additionally, professional development seminars and in-service training can be organized at regular intervals for individuals working in these fields, and an ethical and inclusive service approach can be promoted. To remove and reduce digital inequalities, making digital technologies more accessible to everyone can be supported. This way, a more equitable approach can increase the effectiveness of service delivery and make access easier for individuals from all segments of society. A civil society organization (CSO) is an independent organization formed by individuals voluntarily coming together for a common purpose, which is non-profit, democratic, based on volunteerism, and aims to generate social benefit.

FEATURES AND NECESSITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN INCREASING THE SERVICE QUALITY:

1. It should be beneficiary (target audience) focused.

The service should be appropriate to real needs and able to provide an appropriate response.

2. The degree of beneficiary (target audience) satisfaction is important.

Satisfaction with the service

The suitability of the service to their needs

A noticeable improvement in their lives after receiving the service

3. There is a principle of voluntarism.

Voluntary participation is at the forefront of the organization and its activities.

4. It does not pursue profit.

Even if it generates income, it uses it for social activities rather than for distributing dividends.

5. It aims to benefit society.

It operates in areas such as education, health, environment, human rights, youth, culture, aid, and animal rights.

6. Participation and democratic operation are important.

Members or volunteers are involved in decision-making processes.

7. It is based on the principles of transparency and accountability.

Its objectives, operations, activities, donations, and income-expenditure processes must be open to both members and the public.

8. Accessibility and inclusiveness are required.

Everyone (especially disadvantaged groups) must have equal access to services.

9. Effectiveness and social impact must be created.

• Creating behavioral, awareness, quality of life, or rights-based change,

• Producing the intended outcomes.

10. Reliability and continuity must be ensured.

Services must be provided regularly, consistently, and without interruption, and must be free of any suspicion or doubt.

11. Member, volunteer, and staff competence and training are essential.

Well-trained, motivated teams are essential for quality service.

12. Effective use of resources is important.

Sustainable and efficient management of existing material and human resources.

13. Upholding values in society is important.

Social and national values should be taught to young children, especially in schools and within the family. At the forefront of these is the culture of togetherness. Values such as solidarity, cooperation, and responsibility follow.

20 November 2025

Invited Speaker-Prof. Dr. Ahmet Çetin, Manisa Celal Bayar University

Ethical Principles in Social Research and Development Processes

The workshop, which continued on November 20, began with a guest lecture by Prof. Dr. Ahmet Çetin (Manisa Celal Bayar University) on the theme of Community Service and Ethics. The panel discussion on Inter-institutional Cooperation within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals, Aging, Quality of Life, and Social Projects was moderated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Didem İşlek; Lecturer Mustafa Özhan Kalaç (Manisa Celal Bayar University) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emete Toros- Girne University 60+ Rejuvenation University presented their cooperation and projects on this subject. During the workshop, presentations and discussions emphasized the importance of planning and implementing community service applications within the framework of ethical principles. It was also stated that inter-institutional collaborations supported by the Sustainable Development Goals should be transformed into structures that target long-term social impact, rather than being temporary. In the studies conducted under the headings of aging and quality of life, it was emphasized that older individuals should not be passive but should actively participate in the process. Thus, it was concluded that more inclusive results could be achieved both ethically and socially.

Academics contributing to the panel emphasized the need for universities to work more closely and collaborate more effectively with local governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector in terms of producing more comprehensive knowledge and transferring this knowledge to society. It was suggested that successful examples such as the 60+ Rejuvenation University, which is a very good example, should be spread throughout the country, and that the concept of lifelong learning should be conveyed to individuals from an early age as a very important step. The importance of embracing the concept of "volunteering" across all segments

of society, supporting volunteerism, and universities designing social responsibility projects more frequently and regularly, involving both students and academics in these projects, was emphasized. Recommendations related to this section of the workshop include the need to proceed with ethical principles from the design stage of community service projects to the monitoring and evaluation stage, to determine the needs of the target audience in a scientific manner, and to regularly report the data obtained from the projects. Other important recommendations include the use of technological tools in a way that is accessible to the elderly, the support of studies and activities that can increase intergenerational cooperation, and the organization of platforms and environments where various institutions can share information with each other.

Inter-institutional Cooperation, Aging, Quality of Life, and Social Projects within the Framework of Sustainable Development Goals

Moderator: Dr. Didem İşlek

Inter-Institutional Cooperation and Societal Projects within the Scope of Sustainable Development   Goals
Lecturer- Mustafa Özhan Kalaç- Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi

Doç. Dr. Emete Toros- Girne 60+ Refreshment University

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Inter-Institutional Cooperation and Societal Projects within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals: Woman and Civil Projects

Moderator: Dr. Mukaddes Sakallı Demirok
Prof. Dr. Fatoş Silman from the Cyprus International University

Ayşe Kanlıada from the Cancer Patients Aid Association

Berna Yılmazoğlu Özdoğa from Lefkoşa Başkent Lions

Ipek Denizli

Inter-Institutional Cooperation within the Framework of Sustainable Development Goals: Under the heading of Women and Social Projects, moderator Prof. Dr. Mukaddes Sakallı Demirok led the discussion, with Prof. Dr. Fatoş Silman from the Cyprus International University, Ayşe Kanlıada from the Cancer Patients Aid Association, Berna Yılmazoğlu Özdoğa from Lefkoşa Başkent Lions, and Ipek Denizli, a research artist, presenting their recommendations on the subject. The presentations highlighted that the various problems women face in their social lives can be addressed and solved through interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches. The speakers emphasized that planning projects in the fields of education, health, social support, and culture in line with the Sustainable Development Goals would increase the impact and sustainability of the projects. It was also stated that in projects aimed at empowering women, needs analyses should be conducted based on real-life data, the data should be monitored and tracked, and women should be actively involved in decision-making processes rather than passively. Therefore, it is crucial for civil society organizations and universities to work together towards this goal. This will accelerate academic knowledge production and improve the quality of projects supporting implementation. Furthermore, throughout the session, it was noted that the work being advanced on women's health and psychosocial support should adopt a holistic approach. Examples of projects carried out through the Cancer Patients Aid Association and Lefkoşa Başkent Lions were shared, highlighting the importance of embracing the concept of "volunteering" and supporting similar projects and initiatives at an institutional level. The study also emphasized that projects focusing on culture and art, carried out through the artist's perspective, created an effective space for women to freely express their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. It was stated that through art, which supports universality and inclusivity, women can become more visible in society, freely share the problems they may encounter in life with society without feeling pressured, and make their voices heard more strongly. It has been stated that painting, music, dance, and similar artistic activities have a huge impact on women, increasing their self-confidence and enabling them to participate actively in social life. These activities can raise

awareness that women can also be active individuals in society and support the development of empathy towards women among different segments of society. The recommendations for this part of the workshop are similar to those for other parts. In order for women's and social studies to be actively and regularly sustainable, strategic plans should be determined for the long term, and projects should be evaluated regularly.

Sharing successful implementation practices and facilitating access to funding sources were also highlighted among the recommendations to strengthen communication between various institutions. In addition, it has been stated that mentoring programs should be increased to support and advance the leadership skills of young women, and that innovative projects and research should be supported to enable women to become more active individuals in their economic, cultural, and social lives. In this light, universities and civil society organizations can work together to establish sustainable support mechanisms for young women. In particular, it was noted that activities designed within the scope of education and entrepreneurship would enable women to participate more actively in decision-making processes. Furthermore, encouraging research focused on gender equality and translating the results of this research into practice would contribute significantly to policy development processes. It was stated that with the dissemination of such studies, lasting and effective steps could be taken towards empowering women in social life.

An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Social Issues within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals: Disability

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Zehra Altınay

Dr. Günay Kibrit- Association for Orthopedically Disabled Persons North Cyprus

Bahire Çoşkuner Doğru- Hearing and Speech Impaired Persons Foundation

Social Issues within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals: The session held under the heading of Disability was moderated by Prof. Dr. Zehra Altınay and discussed in depth with the contributions of experts in the field. During the session, Dr. Günay Kibrit (Cyprus Turkish Orthopedic Disabled Association) and Bahire Çoşkuner Doğru (Cyprus Turkish Hearing and Speech Impaired Foundation) shared new project and application proposals aligned with sustainable development goals in the field of disability with the participants. Presentations highlighted inclusive education models aimed at increasing the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in social life, the role of accessible environments and digital transformation in the field of disability, equal opportunities in employment, and awareness-based community projects. Furthermore, it was emphasized that strong partnerships between civil society organizations, local governments, and educational institutions are a critical factor in improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, and the necessity of sustainable, measurable, and scalable projects was underscored.

An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Social Issues within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals: Children and Environment, Technology

Moderator: Dr. İpek Danju

Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Bicen- Coordination of Quality, Near East University

Dr. Emirali Evcimen- Gazimağusa Special Education Center

An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Social Issues within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals: Children and Environment, Technology was moderated by Doç. Dr. İpek Danju and offered an interdisciplinary perspective. During the session, Dr. Emirali Evcimen (Gazimağusa Special Education Center), Leman Cankat (Ceramic Artist), and Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Biçen (Near East University Quality Coordination) shared suggestions and best practice examples that will contribute to sustainable development at the intersection of children, the environment, and technology. The presentations addressed the importance of early childhood education in developing children's environmental awareness, art and creativity-based environmental awareness activities, and the contribution of technology-supported learning environments to sustainability goals. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the conscious use of digital technologies should be structured in a way that strengthens children's social, emotional, and environmental awareness; it was stated that quality-focused education policies are one of the cornerstones of sustainable development.

Paper Presentations

Moderator: Dr. Menil Çelebi

The symposium is compatible with SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 11 and SDG 17.

The symposium, which concluded with online presentations, served as an important platform for sharing academic knowledge, policy development, and practical recommendations aligned with sustainable development goals. The papers presented at the symposium highlighted multidimensional approaches to building a sustainable society in areas such as education, disability, environment, children, technology, and social inclusion. This academic environment, which encouraged inter-institutional cooperation, provided decision-makers, practitioners, and researchers with guiding outputs, demonstrating once again that social growth and development are only possible through inclusive, participatory, and sustainable policies. In this regard, the symposium serves as an important scientific and social service that contributes to the implementation of sustainable development goals at the local and national levels.

This symposium has enabled social issues to be addressed through a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach based on the Sustainable Development Goals. The sessions held under the themes of disability, children, environment, and technology highlighted fundamental principles such as inclusivity, accessibility, quality-focused education, and social awareness. With contributions from expert academics and practitioners in the field, it was emphasized that sustainable development must be addressed not only in economic terms, but also in its social,

cultural, and human dimensions. The views and recommendations presented during the symposium served as a guide for policymakers, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and local governments, offering sustainable and feasible model proposals that will strengthen inter-institutional cooperation. In this context, the symposium is considered an important academic and social platform that goes beyond knowledge sharing, supporting social transformation and contributing to the construction of a sustainable future.